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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/935,255	08/22/2001	Ronald A. Weimer	MTI-31529	1208

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EXAMINER

CHEN, JACK S J

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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2813

NOTIFICATION DATE	DELIVERY MODE
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06/30/2008

ELECTRONIC

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

jpolmatier@whdlaw.com

Office Action Summary	Application No. 09/935,255	Applicant(s) WEIMER, RONALD A.	
	Examiner Jack Chen	Art Unit 2813	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 28 May 2008.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-5, 7-57, 73, 75-81, 96 and 98-121 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) See Continuation Sheet is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-5, 7-14, 16-21, 98-100, 103-106, 112 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Continuation of Disposition of Claims: Claims withdrawn from consideration are 15,22-57,73,75-81,83-96,101,102,107-111 and 113-121.

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 4/14/08 has been entered.

For the purpose of patentability, these claims will be interpreted as best understood.

Claim status

- 1) Claims canceled: 6, 58-72, 74, 82 and 97
- 2) Claims pending: 1-5, 7-57, 73, 75-81, 96 and 98-121
- 3) Claims withdrawn from further consideration: 15, 22-57, 73, 75-81, 83-96, 101, 102, 107-111 and 113-121
- 4) **Claims Active: 1-5, 7-14, 16-21, 98-100, 103-106 and 112**

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

2. Claims **1-5, 7-14, 16-19, 98-100, 103-104, 106 and 112** are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Muralidhar et al., U.S./6,297,095 B1.

Re claim 1, Muralidhar discloses a method of forming a nitride barrier layer, comprising the steps of: exposing a dielectric material 14/102 to a silicon-containing gas under low partial pressure to deposit a layer of silicon 15/16/17/18/19/21/103/104 (figs. 6-10, 21-22, col. 10, lines 25-65) over the dielectric material; and exposing the silicon layer to a nitrogen-containing gas to form a silicon nitride barrier layer 106/107 (figs. 23-25; col. 16, lines 19-36) over the dielectric material effective to inhibit passage of a dopant (note: inherently shows this because this is the intrinsic properties of the nitride material) into the dielectric material, see figs. 1-28 and cols. 1-22 for more details.

Re claim 2, wherein the dielectric material is exposed to the silicon-containing gas at a partial pressure of about 10^{-2} Torr or less (col. 11, lines 37-50).

Re claim 3, wherein the dielectric material is exposed to the silicon-containing gas at a partial pressure of about 10^{-2} to about 10^{-7} Torr (col. 11, lines 37-50).

Re claim 4, wherein the dielectric material is exposed to the silicon-containing gas at a temperature of about 500°C to about 700°C (col. 10, lines 35-58).

Re claim 5, a method of forming a nitride barrier layer, comprising the steps of: irradiating a dielectric material 14/102 with a silicon-containing gas under low partial pressure to nucleate the dielectric material with a layer of silicon 15/16/17/18/19/21/103/104 (figs. 6-10, 21-22, col. 10, lines 25-65); and exposing the silicon layer to a nitrogen-containing gas to form a silicon nitride barrier layer 106/107 (figs. 23-25; col. 16, lines 19-36) over the dielectric material, said barrier layer effective to inhibit passage of a dopant (note: inherently shows this because this

Art Unit: 2813

is the intrinsic properties of the nitride material) into the dielectric material, see figs. 1-28 and cols. 1-22 for more details.

Re claim 7, a method of forming a nitride barrier layer, comprising the steps of: exposing a dielectric material 14/102 to a silicon-containing gas under low partial pressure to deposit a layer of silicon 15/16/17/18/19/21/103/104 (figs. 6-10, 21-22) over the dielectric material; and nitridizing the silicon layer in a nitrogen-containing gas to form a silicon nitride barrier layer 106/107 (figs. 23-25; col. 16, lines 19-36) effective to inhibit passage of a dopant (note: inherently shows this because this is the intrinsic properties of the nitride material) into the dielectric material, see figs. 1-28 and cols. 1-22 for more details.

Re claim 8, a method of forming a nitride barrier layer, comprising the steps of: exposing a surface of a dielectric material 14/102 to a silicon-containing gas at a low partial pressure to nucleate the surface of the dielectric material with a s layer of silicon 15/16/17/18/19/21/103/104 (figs. 6-10, 21-22, col. 10, lines 25-65); and exposing the silicon layer to a nitrogen-containing gas to form a silicon nitride barrier layer 106/107 (figs. 23-25; col. 16, lines 19-36) effective to inhibit passage of a dopant (note: inherently shows this because this is the intrinsic properties of the nitride material) into the dielectric material, see figs. 1-28 and cols. 1-22 for more details.

Re claim 9, a method of forming a nitride barrier layer, comprising the steps of: exposing a dielectric material 14/102 to a silicon-containing gas at a partial pressure of about 10^{-2} Torr or less (col. 11, lines 37-50) to deposit a layer of silicon 15/16/17/18/19/21/103/104 thereon; and nitridizing the silicon layer to form a silicon nitride barrier layer 106/107 (figs. 23-25; col. 16, lines 19-36) over the dielectric material, said barrier layer effective to inhibit passage of a dopant

Art Unit: 2813

(note: inherently shows this because this is the intrinsic properties of the nitride material) into the dielectric material, see figs. 1-28 and cols. 1-22 for more details.

Re claim 10, wherein the dielectric material is exposed to the silicon-containing gas at a temperature of about 500°C to about 700°C (col. 10, lines 35-58).

Re claim 11, wherein the silicon-containing gas is selected from the group consisting of dichlorosilane, silicon tetrachloride, silane, and disilane (col. 10, lines 25-35).

Re claim 12, wherein exposing the dielectric material to the silicon-containing gas is by plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition, low pressure chemical vapor deposition, or rapid thermal chemical vapor deposition (col. 10, lines 14-58).

Re claim 13, wherein the silicon-containing gas is deposited by rapid thermal chemical vapor deposition (col. 5, lines 47-67) at about 500°C. to about 700°C (i.e., 600°C, col. 10, lines 14-58)..

Re claim 14, wherein the dielectric material comprises silicon dioxide (col. 7, lines 49-55).

Re claim 16, a method of forming a nitride barrier layer, comprising the steps of: exposing a dielectric material to a silicon-containing gas at a partial pressure of about 10^{-2} to about 10^{-7} Torr (i.e., 10^{-2} Torr, col. 11, lines 37-50) to nucleate the dielectric material 14/102 with a layer of silicon 15/16/17/18/19/21/103/104 (figs. 6-10, 21-22, col. 10, lines 25-65); and exposing the silicon layer to a nitrogen-containing gas to form a silicon nitride barrier layer 106/107 (figs. 23-25; col. 16, lines 19-36) effective to inhibit passage of a dopant (note: inherently shows this because this is the intrinsic properties of the nitride material) into the dielectric material, see figs. 1-28 and cols. 1-22 for more details.

Art Unit: 2813

Re claim 17, a method of forming a nitride barrier layer, comprising the steps of: exposing a dielectric material 14/102 to a silicon-containing gas at a partial pressure of about 10^{-2} to about 10^{-7} Torr (i.e., 10^{-2} Torr, col. 11, lines 37-50), a temperature of about 500°C . to about 700°C . (i.e., 600°C , col. 10, lines 35-58) and a duration of about 1 second to about 5 minutes (i.e., 30 seconds, col. 10, lines 35-58), to nucleate the dielectric material with a layer of silicon 15/16/17/18/19/21/103/104 (figs. 6-10, 21-22, col. 10, lines 25-65); and exposing the silicon layer to a nitrogen-containing gas to form a silicon nitride barrier layer 106/107 (figs. 23-25; col. 16, lines 19-36) effective to inhibit passage of a dopant (note: inherently shows this because this is the intrinsic properties of the nitride material) into the dielectric material, see figs. 1-28 and cols. 1-22 for more details.

Re claim 18, a method of forming a nitride barrier layer, comprising the steps of: depositing a silicon layer 15/16/17/18/19/21/103/104 (figs. 6-10, 21-22, col. 10, lines 25-65) onto a dielectric material 14/102 by exposing the dielectric material to a silicon-containing gas under low partial pressure; and thermally annealing the silicon layer in a nitrogen-containing gas (figs. 23-25; col. 16, lines 19-36) to form the nitride barrier layer, said barrier layer effective to inhibit passage of a dopant (note: inherently shows this because this is the intrinsic properties of the nitride material) into the dielectric material, see figs. 1-28 and cols. 1-22 for more details..

Re claim 19, a method of forming a nitride barrier layer, comprising the steps of: depositing a silicon layer 15/16/17/18/19/21/103/104 (figs. 6-10, 21-22, col. 10, lines 25-65) onto a dielectric material 14/102 by exposing the dielectric material to a silicon-containing gas under low partial pressure, and exposing the silicon layer to a nitrogen-containing gas at a temperature of about 700°C . to about 900°C . to nitridize the silicon layer (figs. 23-25; col. 16,

Art Unit: 2813

lines 19-36) to form the nitride barrier layer, said barrier layer effective to inhibit passage of a dopant (note: inherently shows this because this is the intrinsic properties of the nitride material) into the dielectric material, see figs. 1-28 and cols. 1-22 for more details.

Re claim 98, wherein the silicon-containing gas is selected from the group consisting of dichlorosilane, silicon tetrachloride, silane, and disilane (i.e., silane; col. 10, lines 25-35).

Re claim 99, wherein the step of exposing the dielectric material to the silicon gas comprises chemical vapor deposition of the silicon gas (col. 10, lines 14-58).

Re claim 100, wherein the step of exposing the dielectric material to the silicon gas comprises rapid thermal chemical vapor deposition of the silicon gas (col. 5, lines 47-67 and col. 10, lines 14-58).

Re claim 103, wherein the step of exposing the silicon layer comprises thermally annealing the silicon layer in a nitrogen-containing gas (col. 16, lines 19-37).

Re claim 104, wherein the step of exposing the silicon layer comprises a temperature of about 700°C. to about 900°C (col. 16, lines 19-37).

Re claim 106, wherein the nitrogen-containing gas is selected from the group consisting of nitrogen, ammonia, nitrogen trifluoride, nitrogen oxide, and a nitrogen-helium mixture (col. 16, lines 19-37).

Re claim 112, wherein the step of exposing the dielectric material comprises a partial pressure of about 10^{-2} to about 10^{-7} Torr (i.e., 10^{-2} Torr, col. 11, lines 37-50), a temperature of about 500°C. to about 700°C. (i.e., 600°C, col. 10, lines 35-58) and a duration of about 1 second to about 5 minutes (i.e., 30 seconds, col. 10, lines 35-58).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims **20-21 and 105** are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Muralidhar et al., U.S./6,297,095 B1.

Muralidhar et al. disclosed above; however, Muralidhar et al. is silent to the flow rate and duration of the nitrogen-containing gas as required in claims 20-21 and 105. The claimed ranges of flow rate and time/duration, absent evidence of disclosure of criticality for the range giving unexpected results are considered to involve routine optimization while has been held to be within the level of ordinary skill in the art. As noted in *In re Aller* 220 F.2d 454, 456, 105 USPQ 233, 235 (CCPA 1955), the selection of reaction parameters such as flow rage, time/duration would have been obvious. *See also In re Waite* 77 USPQ 586 (CCPA 1948); *In re Scherl* 70 USPQ 204 (CCPA 1946); *In re Irmischer* 66 USPQ 314 (CCPA 1945); *In re Norman* 66 USPQ 308 (CCPA 1945); *In re Swenson* 56 USPQ 372 (CCPA 1942); *In re Sola* 25 USPQ 433 (CCPA 1935); *In re Dreyfus* 24 USPQ 52 (CCPA 1934).

Therefore, the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to select any suitable flow rate and exposing time in the method of Muralidhar in order to nitridize the silicon layer. Furthermore, the specification contains no disclosure of either the critical nature of the claimed process (i.e. the flow rate of 100-10000 sccm for about 1 second to about 180 minutes) or any unexpected results

Art Unit: 2813

arising therefrom. Where patentability is said to be based upon particular chosen limitations or upon another variable recited in a claim, the Applicant must show that the chosen limitations are critical. *In re Woodruff*, 919 F.2d 1575, 1578 (Fed. Cir. 1990).

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jack Chen whose telephone number is (571)272-1689. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday (8:00am-4:30pm).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Carl W. Whitehead can be reached on (571)272-1702. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Jack Chen
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 2813

/Jack Chen/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 2813
June 23, 2008